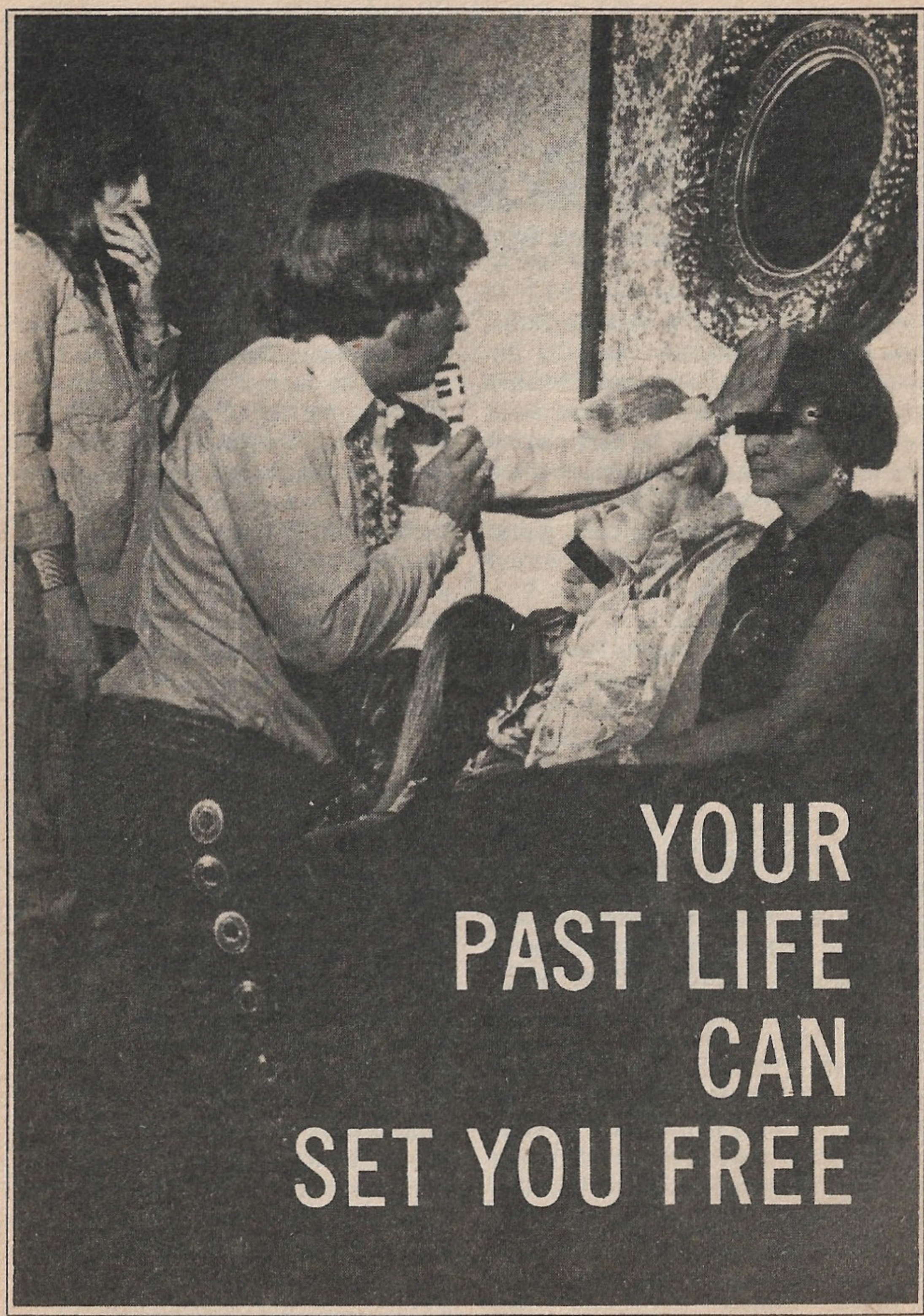
YOUR
PAST LIFE
CAN
SET YOU FREE

Are your problems the result of something that happened in your previous lives? Dick Sutphen believes you can be happier if you recognize these carry-overs.

By Brad Steiger

FOR THE slightest infraction of prison rules the convicts could expect vicious abuse from the sadistic guards. One of the worst of their ingenious tortures involved wrapping the offender in a canvas straitjacket and dousing him with buckets of water. Then the canvas would dry — and shrink — causing the prisoner excruciating pain.

One man — Ed Morrell — devised an incredible method of escaping the pain of this cruel torture. He would "dream" himself out of his body and travel to another place. When Morrell was released from prison he became a champion of prison reform and published a number of books detailing the abuses inherent in the antiquated prison system which he had learned at first hand serving his term about the turn of the century. He died in obscurity in the early 1930's. After living in Arizona for many years, he is believed to have moved to California.

Now Dick Sutphen, psychical researcher and past-life regression hypnotist, was saying to me: "I would kind

Reincarnation therapists Dick and Trenna Sutphen conduct "past-life and future freedom" seminars all across the country. Subjects are hypnotized in groups and asked to remember previous lives.

of make my body die. Once I did that little death, I would dream and go. I would move through the dream and travel to faraway places. I would do this to escape the pain whenever I was in the jacket. I tried it at other times but it didn't work."

The man who may be the present incarnation of Ed Morrell was seated in our living room in Scottsdale, Ariz.

"I'm not claiming as a definite fact that I was Ed Morrell, fighting the encroaching railroads, landing in prison and later campaigning for penal reform," Dick said. "But I have had some wild dreams which seem related to that lifetime. I see myself in the Sierra Madre mountains, an 1884 saddle-ring Winchester in my hands, watching men passing below me. I have been regressed by Jean Perry* and I came up with a remarkable amount of information about Ed Morrell that checks out."

Is it mere coincidence that Dick has an 1884 saddle-ring Winchester hanging above his fireplace in his Scottsdale home? And why does a man who grew up in Omaha, Nebr., and worked at advertising agencies in major metropolitan cities dress like a working cowboy? Even when he is conducting his past-life and future freedom hypnotic regression seminars, Sutphen looks more like a country singer than a master hypnotist.

"I dress to be comfortable and to be me," Dick explains. "I don't want people to get hung up on what style of clothing I'm wearing. I want them to hear what I am telling them about personal responsibility and their ability to fashion their own reality."

Scores of men and women come to hear what Dick and his wife Trenna have to say about past lives. During 1977 they conducted seminars in 15 major cities and appeared with David Hartman on ABC's Good Morning America, the David Susskind Show and NBC's Tomorrow Show with Tom Snyder. In addition they have been interviewed by hundreds of media journalists as they have toured the United States.

Why do people attend?

"Everyone comes for different reasons," Dick answered. "But often it is not for the reasons they thought. And in our minds, no one is there by accident. It may be that some higher aspect of consciousness directs them, for their attendance usually results in numerous benefits for them.

"One woman came seeking knowledge of a prior incarnation," Sutphen explained, "but what she needed was instruction in techniques for spiritual protection. Many who attend our seminars have opened the doors to their Higher Selves, thus achieving a direct channel to expanded awareness and future life directions.

"There are other reasons," he continued. "Some learn relaxation techniques; some come to get information on how to overcome sexual problems; others wish to learn how to deal with depression. Trenna and I have witnessed many spectacular breakthroughs but I hesitate to speak of them, for there's no way of course to guarantee results. I can say, however, that about 95 percent of those who attend our seminars receive strong past-life impressions."

* A hypnotherapist associated with the Des Moines, Iowa, Biofeedback Clinic.

Sutphen believes that the reception of a past-life memory is one of the least important things that happen during the sessions. "The overall understanding, expanded belief systems, methodologies and techniques constitute the real significance," he says.

Who attends past-life seminars?

According to Sutphen's office staff — two attractive women named Anna and Judy — 60 percent of those attending a past-life and future freedom seminar fit into one of four categories: nurses, teachers, medical doctors and lawyers.

"The rest are housewives and other nonprofessional people," Dick said. "We also get a lot of psychologists and we recently conducted a training seminar which drew a number of psychiatrists. Many of these men and women are using the techniques they learn in their own specialized therapies and having remarkable results. Some of them become so enthusiastic that they end up making claims that I as a nonmedical person would not dare to make."

What kind of experiences do men and women have in the course of a past-life seminar?

The Sutphens structure each seminar to provide the attendees with a maximum of regressive and experimental hypnosis and psychic experiences but even more important, according to Dick and Trenna, is their effort to give each man and woman the tools to continue such experiences in their own homes and to begin to reprogram their lives in a positive manner.

"The tools we refer to," Trenna said, "are actual techniques, methodologies, exercises and understandings which enable people to feel better about themselves and more at peace with themselves, the world and everyone in it. We teach self-regression techniques and mind power techniques. The lectures and supportive material illustrate that one's only limitation in life is his or her own belief system."

Dick believes that anyone can be hypnotized if he will trust himself and the hypnotist and if he is capable of concentrating.

But how is it possible to guarantee each attendee will glimpse a past life?

Sutphen admits that there is no absolute assurance that he can produce such an experience but he reiterates, "Well over 95 percent of the thousands of people who have attended our seminars have seen impressions which they consider to be related to the past. The other five percent may have to continue to use the techniques at home after the seminar to break through — which is really only a matter of trusting themselves. Everybody can do it, though. I'm convinced of that."

The Sutphens have observed that the more an individual uses his imagination the better subject he or she will be, because that person has already mentally conditioned himself or herself for visual receiving.

"Daydreamers are great subjects," Trenna commented.

"Right," Dick agreed. "In fact, we tell people that if they never daydream or fantasize they should not come to the seminars expecting to see their past lives."

"But we do urge them to attend," Trenna interjected, "for they still will

receive information which will help them to change their lives. Remember, we stress that seeing a past life is only one of many goals."

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AT A recent past-life and future freedom seminar in Scottsdale, my wife Francie and I observed a number of men and women who, ostensibly, were "seeing" past lives. After Dick has conditioned the participants, he places the entire roomful under hypnosis and guides them through the experience.

"I now want you to move to a very important event that transpired between the ages of 25 and 30," he may say. "On the count of three these new impressions will come into your mind, very vividly. One. . . two. . . three. . . ."

At this point, if the conditioning has been effective, the participants will receive dreamlike or fantasylike impressions from the past. They are not unconscious; they are open to guidance as they "float" in this relaxed state.

Dick then moves them to deeper levels within their psyches. "Deeper, deeper, deeper," he may say. "You will move back to time before this one, to a previous life experience which will explain a problem you have today. On the count of three, these impressions will come vividly into your mind. . . ."

At each seminar about 12 people are individually regressed in depth as part of the demonstrations. We saw such experiences unfolding at the Scottsdale seminar:

A woman who had a problem communicating with her husband saw herself as a slave in the Old South, a trusted cook and house servant. When her master took in an injured black man for her to nurse back to health, she eventually married her "patient" and bore him a son. As the years passed and the son matured into an intelligent teenager, the master received an offer from a wealthy family who wished to buy the boy. She encouraged her master to sell her son because she knew his opportunities would be better with the other family. When her husband learned of this he never spoke to her again. In her present life her son had died while his father was out of town, having trusted the boy to her care. This was the cause of his breaking off communication with her.

A man with a problem of impotency envisioned himself as a Viking raider, looting and raping women. He flashed through a number of lifetimes, each with a pattern of severely abusing women. Then he focused on a more recent life experience in which he was molesting a woman and planning to rape her. She fought back and gouged his cheek. In his anger he struck her viciously, killing her. Then he noticed her young daughter who had seen the entire bloody episode. She threw herself at him, pounding his back with her tiny fists. The memory appeared to unnerve the man dramatically.

An attendee whose problem was alcoholism first recalled an early incident in his present lifetime. He was too young to buy liquor and had prevailed upon an older boy to buy six-packs for a Saturday night spree. Then he recalled an experience as a soldier in the Civil War when he was shot in the hip and the musket ball shattered the bones at its point of entry. The veter-

an took to drinking whiskey to dull his pain and became an alcoholic. The participant was thereby able to see why he may have begun drinking so early in his present lifetime and he was able to chart more clearly the dangers ahead.

At an earlier seminar we had watched in fascination when a participant "linked up" with Trenna. She has a unique method of "chakra" linkage which enables her to monitor, channel and relive the past lives of others. In this instance she told the man that he had been a sea captain in 1897. To provide more room for cargo in his ship he had eliminated half of the lifeboats. An explosion occurred at sea and when the ship began to sink the captain made certain that he was safely seated in a lifeboat while half his men faced drowning. To make certain that rations would be sufficient he threw a wounded man out of his boat. Those who remained in the lifeboat eventually threw their captain overboard.

Trenna informed the man that his present life avoidance of responsibility and his penchant for punishing himself for unidentifiable guilt had to do with this incident which had occurred in a past life.

"You have deep depression almost constantly," she said, "and your stomach spasms bother you all the time. This all relates to this past life and it is time that you let go of the guilt. Let go of it now. Use your time in this life to help others. Only you can erase this karma by believing that you can."

The participant was white-faced. Maybe he had never heard of karma — the belief in divine compensation, that what you sow in one lifetime will be reaped in another as a process of spiritual evolution and growth — but what Trenna had said appeared to have touched something deep within him.

"Did anything Trenna said make sense?" Dick asked.

"Everything! Everything!" the man shouted. "Even down to the knot in my stomach. I began to have the stomach spasm in the middle of the regression.

"Yes," he admitted. "I've spent my life hiding from responsibility and yes, depression has bothered me all my life." The man buried his face in his hands, unable to talk anymore.

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WERE THESE men and women remembering past lives or are there alternate explanations?

Perhaps during hypnotic trance, some segment of the unconscious mind seizes control and impersonates a fictitious personality for the purpose of providing insight into the darker recesses of the subject's character. Prompted by the hypnotist's suggestions, the unconscious may dramatize some inner conflict, some weakness of moral fiber or some approaching illness or crisis by personifying itself as a previous physical embodiment of the present entity.

What seem to be past lives may also be delusions of memory, demonstrations of psychic ability, unconscious impersonations to please the hypnotist and satisfy his suggestions, even possession by discarnate entities. And in some cases they may be pure fantasy.

Nevertheless, in the past decade psychologists, marriage and family counselors and even a few psychia-

trists have begun to use past-life therapy and they do not seem to be particularly concerned about arguing the metaphysics or even the reality of reincarnation. If it means less pain for the patient and an easier time for the doctor, then remembering a past life has pragmatic value in that it makes for more effective therapy.

Dr. Morris Netherton, a Los Angeles psychologist, has found that everyone he has worked with has had more than one past life. His approach to therapy lies in tracing destructive patterns through several life experiences. For healing purposes, Dr. Netherton believes, it does not matter whether the experience is treated as creative fantasy or past-life memory. What is crucial to the success of the therapy, according to Dr. Netherton, is the individual's willingness to assume responsibility for his or her behavior in the present.

Dr. John A. Goldhwaite, formerly a minister and now a gestalt-trained clinical psychologist, theorizes that fantasy and memory are essentially the same mechanism. In his opinion it does not matter to the success of the therapy whether the material comes from an actual past life or from the hypnotist's suggestion.

Dr. Sigrid McPherson, a Jungian-trained therapist, believes that the body behaves according to one's belief structure. If a person believes that he or she was stabbed to death in a past life, then on some level of consciousness that person will behave as if it is so.

Dr. Reima Kampman, a psychiatrist on the staff of the University of Oulu in Finland, observes that inside each of us exist other "people" whom our conscious selves might never claim. In her opinion, men and women who are able to display multiple personalities under hypnosis are actually healthier than those who cannot. In comparison with persons who cannot respond to the hypnotist's suggestion to relive a former lifetime, the multiple personality types show greater stress tolerance, more adaptability and far less neurotic guilt.

Dick Sutphen often says, "I am convinced that the past relates to today. One's past is admitted to be important to what one is today by every authority. So, too, I believe, our past lifetimes are meaningful and important to what and who we are today."

* * *

WHAT KIND of boy grows up to be one of the nation's foremost investigators of psychic phenomena and an active spokesman for reincarnation* as fact rather than mystical Eastern theory?

Dick grew up in Omaha, Nebr., making occasional forays to a relative's farm in Iowa. He loved to read, make model airplanes of balsa wood and draw cartoons. The lanky blond teenager had a mystical bent that would one day mature into a serious interest in the metaphysical. He realized he was a bit different from the other kids but he was rather proud of this. He was not a maverick but he did get into trouble in high school when he edited an underground newspaper to protest certain administration policies. To the transient shame of his parents,

* Now 40 years of age, Dick Sutphen has published 29 books, the most recent being *You Were Born Again to be Together* and *Past Lives, Future Loves*, both Simon & Schuster Pocket Books releases.

Dick was actually kicked out of school until his mother was able to effect a peaceful negotiation between her son and the high school staff.

After graduation Dick attended the Art Center School in Los Angeles, an advertising school or two and a couple of colleges here and there. Dick admits he was an "academic floater" while he worked in various ad agencies around the country. Then about 10 years ago he moved to Arizona and experienced an explosion of psychic energy in his personal life which led him into an investigation of the paranormal and the establishment of an hypnosis center.

I asked Dick why he favored hypnosis as a tool for psychical research and for the exploration of past lives as well.

"Simply because hypnosis is controllable," he replied without hesitation. "Dreams, persistent memories and so forth are dramatic but spontaneous — beyond the easy reach of the investigator. Hypnosis gives the subject permission to recall, to be psychic, to regulate breathing and to induce tranquility."

I asked him to describe certain trends he has noticed in his research with hypnotic regression.

"There is always good old Atlantis," he said. "Many seminar participants come up with information about the fabled lost continent. But here are some statistics I find very interesting. After I have conditioned the participants I send them back to the first lifetime they can recall. In seminar after seminar, the percentages are always the same. They just do not vary — which I find remarkable.

"An extremely primitive, sometimes cavemanlike, existence is recalled by 45 to 50 percent of the participants as their first lifetime on earth.

"Five to 10 percent of every seminar group report an Atlantean existence.

"Another 10 percent claim that they remember lifetimes as extraterrestrials coming to this planet to establish colonies.

"And this is wild: five to eight percent see themselves as a 'Light People' who have come to this planet to assume fleshly bodies."

What conclusions may we draw from such statistics, from such alleged memories, from such dramatic seminar experiences? Dick doesn't push any one philosophy or single theory.

"I'm only interested in people being able to alter their perspective of what constitutes reality," Dick said quietly. "I want men and women to be able to take love into their lives and to live in harmony with an elevated perspective. I want them to look down on negativity and to dare to program their own lives so that their futures may be free of guilt, neuroses and anxieties."

It seems that whether one is talking of his past in the present existence or the past in some previous life experience, such actions and memories become most valuable when they enable us to grow and to achieve our full potential. The past has its uses but it is most precious when it permits us to have a meaningful future.